
INNOVATIVE INSTITUTIONALIZATION USING SMART APPROACHES

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SavaNet-Ghana has innovatively institutionalised the experience capitalization approach using smart non-formal approaches which include a farmer-to-farmer capitalization platform, folk music, storytelling and drama. This article highlights the steps taken, and some of the obstacles seen.

Cover Sava.Net recognises the significant role that drama can play when documenting experiences

SavaNet-Ghana is committed to the development of agribusinesses in Ghana. Our participation in the experience capitalization project run by CTA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), helped us recognise the importance of this approach, and to take the steps needed to institutionalise it.

As described below, SavaNet-Ghana is following various strategies to support the use of this approach within the organisation and in the larger farmer community in our country. We are also playing a lead role, both in Ghana and across West Africa,

by promoting the adoption, dissemination, and institutionalization of experience capitalization within other development organisations, supporting them so that their development interventions have a greater impact.

Institutionalization the smart way

Experience capitalization is in line with the organisation's mission, vision and its core farmer/agribusiness development activities. After we first heard of this approach a couple of years ago, its adoption has followed different strategies:

Farmer-to-Farmer Experience Capitalization Platform (F2F EC Platform):

This has been designed as a community of practice (COP) platform to promote a process for describing and analysing concrete experiences through drama, storytelling, folk music and oral presentations, working with illiterate rural farmers and other agripreneurs.

This COP aims at promoting the exchange of technology/innovation information, and at supporting a knowledge management (KM) strategy. This innovative platform also promotes the adoption of experience capitalization by the wider farming community in Ghana. The F2F EC Platform was first established in October 2018 and has a current membership of 377 farmers and agri-entrepreneurs.



Many reasons explain SavaNet-Ghana's success, one of which is the training that its staff received.

Non-Formal Experience Capitalization Documentation Programme:

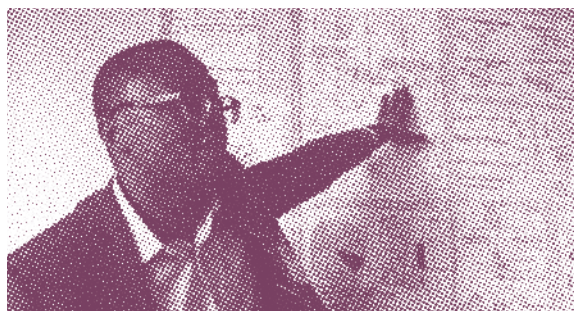
This programme aims at providing the large rural population, including farmers and other agripreneurs, with practical, non-formal training opportunities (i.e., using drama, storytelling, folk music, etc.) for the documentation of their experiences. This initiative began in October 2018 engaging 150 farmers and other agripreneurs working within the SavaNet-Ghana farmer network. They meet every three months and discuss the best way to adopt and support different strategies for the documentation of their experiences and for the dissemination of lessons and recommendations:

- (a) Folk Music: SavaNet-Ghana understands the unique value that folk music has in the traditional system followed for documenting, disseminating and promoting the adoption of best practices and innovations. The organisation therefore employs music for documenting the experiences and innovations of farmers and other agripreneurs, which are translated into simple lyrics in local languages, complemented with music tunes. These are easily sung by adults, young people and children, promoting the adoption of a specific practice. SavaNet-Ghana's KM department is working to promote the dissemination of these experience capitalization songs via community radio stations, community social events, rural media platforms, etc. (Farmers own the copyright of these experience capitalization songs.)
- (b) Drama: SavaNet-Ghana also recognises the significant role that drama can play when documenting experiences, innovations and technologies, or when supporting their adoption. Experience capitalization drama clubs are organised in farming communities to regularly translate the experiences, innovations and technologies that farmers and other agripreneurs are developing into short and simple drama played in local languages.

The teams involved in these experience capitalization drama series also include adults, youth and children, helping promote the inter-generational adoption and dissemination of experiences, innovations and technologies. SavaNet-Ghana's KM department facilitates the development of the drama storylines. The department also provides training on drama as a tool for expressing key ideas.

- (c) Storytelling: Recognising the importance of storytelling in a documentation process, or when disseminating and promoting the adoption of best practices, SavaNet-Ghana is using this technique to ensure that illiterate farmers are able to identify and share lessons and recommendations. SavaNet-Ghana has developed a storytelling guide and has trained a large group of farmers and other agripreneurs, all of whom are using it to share their best practices, innovations, and technologies. This storytelling guide also promotes traditional storytelling techniques among farmers and in farming communities.

Folk music and drama are also used to enrich the storytelling process, so SavaNet-Ghana has instituted an experience capitalization storytelling volunteer programme in different farming communities. Our KM department is working to develop these experience capitalization stories into audio and videos that can be disseminated via various rural media platforms.



Below Experience capitalization is now a major thematic area in the 2019-2023 SavaNet-Ghana Development Strategy



Above Working with farmers and agripreneurs representing diverse ethnic groups, SavaNet-Ghana had to translate its guidelines and documents

Experience Capitalization Policy Development Programme:

SavaNet-Ghana has instituted this initiative to promote the development of innovative policies, and in this way support the documentation, dissemination and adoption of best practices within the SavaNet-Ghana farmers network. The Policy Development Programme started in November 2018, engaging 200 farmers and other agriculture and rural development stakeholders in Ghana.

Training of SavaNet-Ghana staff and farmers:

Training is regularly carried out (every quarter) to enable SavaNet-Ghana farmers and staff to enhance their knowledge on experience capitalization, as well as enhance their involvement in the institutionalization process. The purpose is to develop the necessary skills for monitoring performance and measuring impact – and for using a comprehensive set of indicators in the documentation process. SavaNet-Ghana has so far trained 40 programme officers and 45 farmer leaders.

Why did we succeed?

Many reasons explain SavaNet-Ghana's success in the institutionalization of the experience capitalization approach, one of which is the training that its staff received from CTA. But equally important has been its decision to try innovative and non-formal strategies. Positive results are also due to the leadership and support of the KM department and the organisation's development partners: the Ministry of Food and Agriculture; the United Nations Development Programme; and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Innovatively, SavaNet-Ghana's institutionalization strategy is largely led by the farmers themselves, which ensures the sustainability of the approach. SavaNet-Ghana also works with partners and other organisations, providing the required leadership, technical support services and funding, and sharing its expertise.



Above The innovations of farmers and other agribusinesses are shared as simple lyrics in local languages, complemented with music tunes

Next steps

Experience capitalization is a major thematic area in the 2019-2023 SavaNet-Ghana Development Strategy, and will continue to be a key focus area in the subsequent periods. The adoption of the experience capitalization approach is in line with SavaNet-Ghana's mission, vision and core farmer/agribusiness development strategies, so we are sure it will be part of our work, and that of our network members, in the near future.

Working with farmers and agribusinesses representing diverse ethnic groups within its network, SavaNet-Ghana has seen the need to translate its guidelines and documents, and to work in various languages/dialects. This was a problem which was partly solved by engaging the farmers themselves and inviting them to complete the necessary translations. At the same time, inter-ethnic conflicts affected the level of trust between farmers. This challenge was addressed through dialogue, permanently promoting cooperation agreements among farmers.

SavaNet-Ghana is designing innovative experience capitalization projects, and their implementation will strengthen the work carried out by our organisation. SavaNet-Ghana will also assist other organisations in northern Ghana to adopt the approach and strengthen their KM strategies. This will help us develop the necessary cooperation and partnership agreements required for rural development in our country. We equally aim to work with other development organisations interested in the dissemination of our experience capitalization initiatives in other parts of the world.



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<http://experience-capitalization.cta.int>

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